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The Early Learning Experiences of Inuit Children in Canada

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.	not available for any reference period
..	not available for a specific reference period
...	not applicable
0	true zero or a value rounded to zero
0s	value rounded to 0 (zero) where there is a meaningful distinction between true zero and the value that was rounded
p	preliminary
r	revised
x	suppressed to meet the confidentiality requirements of the *Statistics Act*
E	use with caution
F	too unreliable to be published

The Early Learning Experiences of Inuit Children in Canada

Young Inuit children have the opportunity to learn in different places and with different people. This fact sheet describes the early learning experiences of 2- to 5- year old Inuit children in Canada, using data from the 2006 Aboriginal Children's Survey.

Young Inuit children in Canada

In 2006, the Census of Population counted about 7,000 Inuit children under the age of six in Canada. Most (84%) lived in one of four regions that comprise Inuit Nunangat* (which means 'Inuit homeland' in the Inuit language). These regions are: Nunatsiavut in northern Labrador, Nunavik in northern Quebec, the territory of Nunavut, and the Inuvialuit region in the Northwest Territories. The remaining 16% of Inuit children under the age of six lived outside Inuit Nunangat.

Map 1
The four regions of Inuit Nunangat

Source(s): Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami.

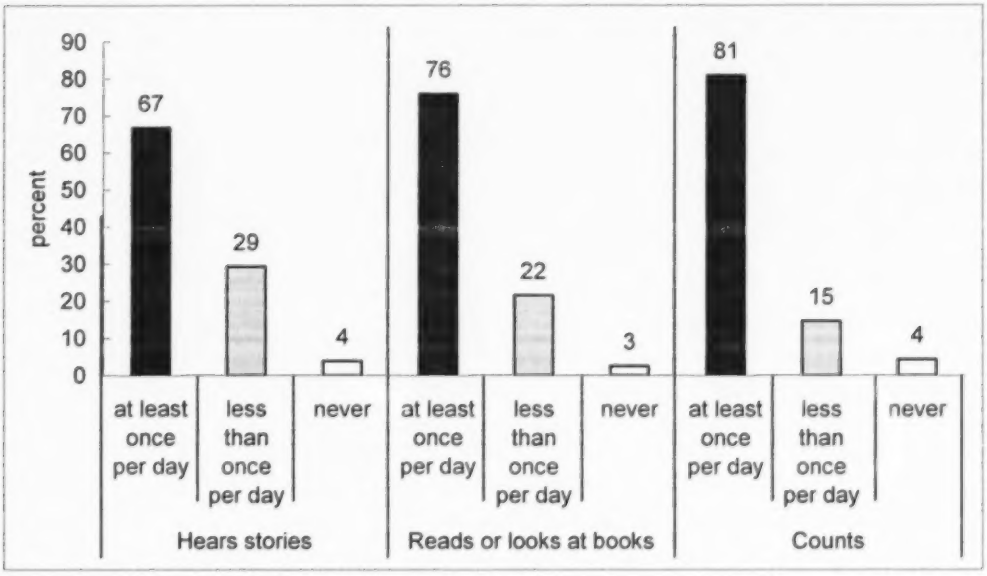
* At the time the Aboriginal Children's Survey data were collected, the term for the Inuit homeland was 'Inuit Nunaat'. More recently, the term has changed to 'Inuit Nunangat'.

In what ways do children learn about words?

Hearing stories, reading books and counting can help children learn about words, language, and culture (Canadian Council on Learning, 2006a).

- Three out of four 2- to 5- year-old Inuit children read or look at books every day, two out of three hear stories every day and four out of five count every day.
- Nine out of 10 Inuit children do at least one of these activities daily, whereas about half of Inuit children do all three activities every day. Only one in fourteen do none of these activities daily.

Chart 1
The majority of Inuit children aged 2 to 5 hear stories, read books, and count once a day or more



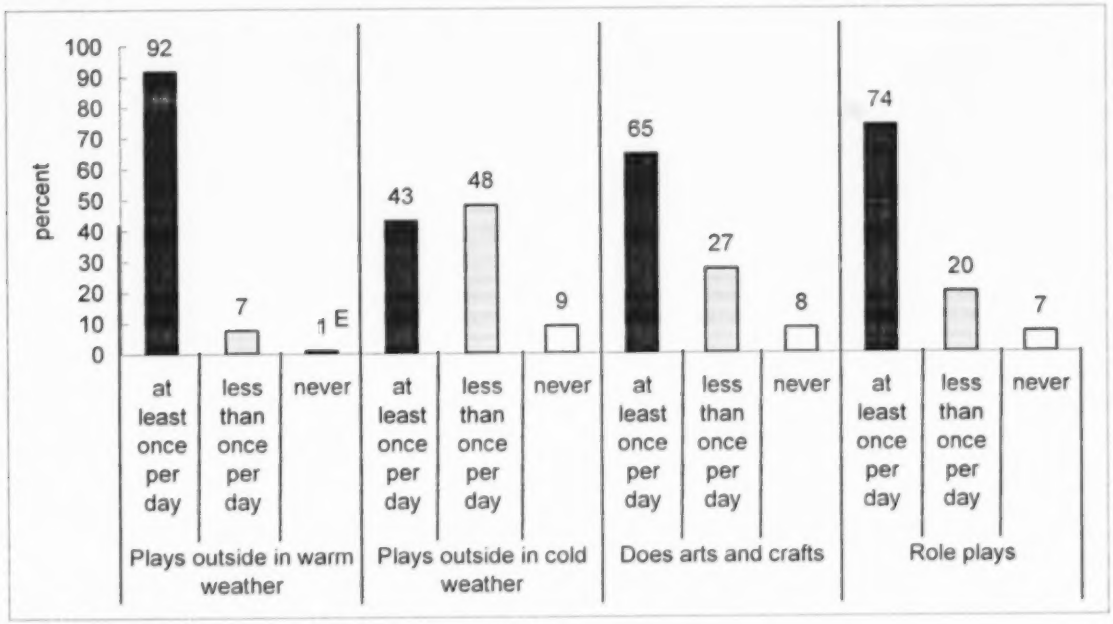
Source(s): Statistics Canada, Aboriginal Children's Survey, 2006.

What is the play environment for Inuit children?

Play is an important part of children's learning because it helps them to develop social, physical, and emotional skills (Canadian Council on Learning, 2006b). Both outdoor play and creative play (like arts and crafts and pretend play) can have a positive impact on children's physical and mental well-being.

- The majority of 2- to 5- year-old Inuit children play outside every day in warm weather (nine out of 10, or 92%). About two out of five play outside every day in cold weather, while another half of children play outside less than once a day in cold weather
- Two out of three Inuit children do arts and crafts and three out of four participate in role playing games (pretend play like playing house or school) every day.
- Nineteen Inuit children out of twenty do at least one of these activities daily (play outside in either warm or cold weather, arts and crafts, role playing games), whereas half of Inuit children do all of these activities daily.

Chart 2
Most Inuit children aged 2 to 5 play outside everyday in warm weather; the majority engages in creative play daily



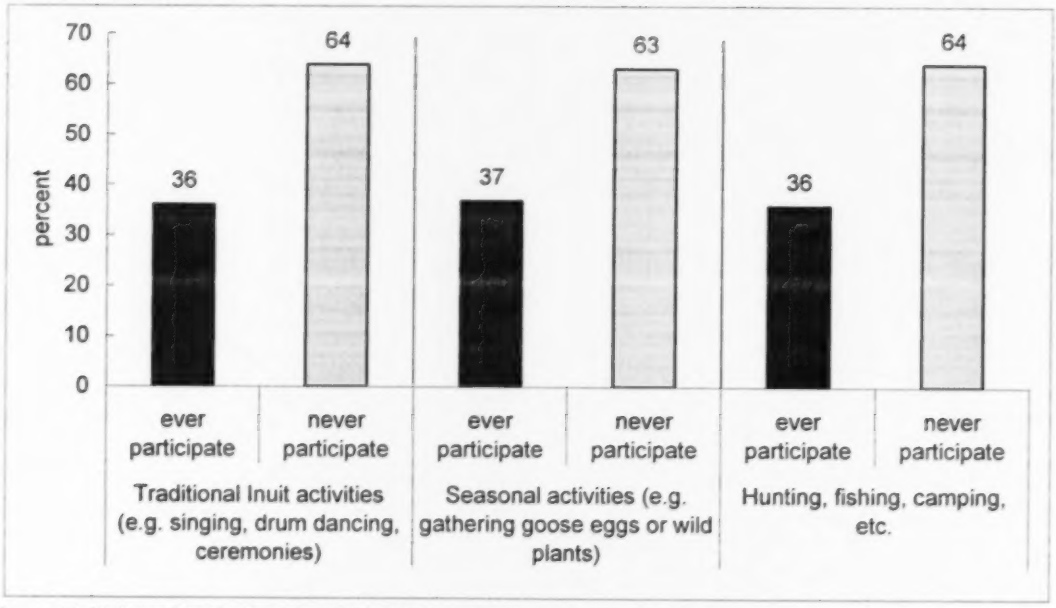
Source(s): Statistics Canada, Aboriginal Children's Survey, 2006.

How many children participate in traditional activities?

Young Inuit children can learn about their culture from participating in traditional and seasonal activities.

- Two out of three 2- to 5- year-old Inuit children participate in traditional activities. Two out of three children participate in seasonal activities and two out of three go hunting, fishing, or camping.
- Seven out of eight Inuit children participate in at least one of the three activities and 38% participate in all three activities, while 13% do not participate in any traditional or seasonal activities.

Chart 3
Two out of three Inuit children under six years old participate in traditional or seasonal activities

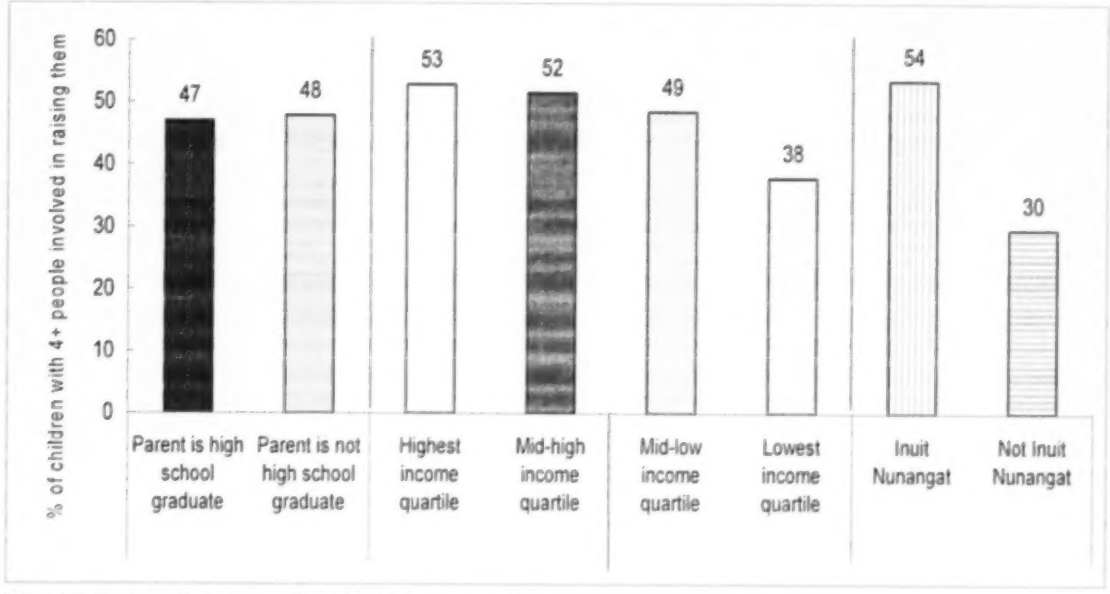


Source(s): Statistics Canada, Aboriginal Children's Survey, 2006.

Who helps children learn?

- Many people are involved in raising Inuit children (Statistics Canada, 2008b). One-half of Inuit children are raised by four or more people. The majority of the time this included the mother (93% of children) and father (77% of children). It also often included a grandparent (48% of children), other relative (47% or children) or non-relative (19% of children).
- Inuit children in families with the lowest incomes were less likely to have many people raising them.
- Inuit children were more likely to have many people involved in raising them if they lived in Inuit Nunangat.
- One in four Inuit children were living with a lone parent. Inuit children living with two parents were more likely to have four or more people involved in raising them compared to children living with a lone parent.
- Three out of four Inuit children have someone to help them understand Inuit culture and history. This person is usually a parent or grandparent, but sometimes is an aunt or uncle, or a teacher or child care provider.

Chart 4
Inuit children under six years old were more likely to have four or more people involved in raising them if they lived in higher income families and in Inuit Nunangat



Source(s): Statistics Canada, Aboriginal Children's Survey, 2006.

Where do children learn?

Many children are also involved in learning experiences outside of the home.

- About one in seven 2- to 5- year-old Inuit children attend child and parent programs (like 'Moms & Tots', 'The Dad Program', or 'Mother Goose').
- Two out of three 4- and 5- year-old Inuit children are in school.
- As well, some children learn in a child care setting. About 40% of 2- to 5- year old Inuit children attend child care. For children attending child care, the most common main type of child care arrangement is a daycare centre.

Is participation in early learning activities related to parent education, family income, and having a lone parent?

Parents' education

- Inuit children of high school graduates are more likely than children of non-graduates to participate in language activities on a daily basis. Two out of three Inuit children of high school graduates hear stories, read or look at books, and count at least once a day, compared to one in two children of non-high school graduates.
- The percentage of Inuit children who participate in all three play activities daily (play outside, do arts and crafts and role play) is the same for children of high school graduates and children of non-graduates.
- Participation in traditional and seasonal activities, and in hunting, fishing, or camping, was the same for Inuit children whose parents had and had not graduated high school.

Income

- Inuit children in lower income families are less likely to participate in language and play activities compared to children in higher income families.
- Inuit children in higher income families are more likely to participate in seasonal activities, and also more likely to go hunting, fishing or camping compared to children in lower income families. There was no difference in participation in traditional activities.

Lone parent

- There are no differences in participation in language and play activities for Inuit children living with a lone parent compared to children living with two parents.
- Inuit children living with two parents are more likely than children living with a lone parent to participate in seasonal activities and to go hunting, fishing, or camping. There was no difference in participation in traditional activities.

What you should know about this fact sheet

The Aboriginal Children's Survey was developed by Statistics Canada and Aboriginal advisors from across the country and was conducted jointly with Human Resources and Social Development Canada. The survey took place between October 2006 and March 2007. Parents or guardians of approximately 10 500 Aboriginal children under six years of age, including about 1,700 Inuit children, provided information through a combination of personal and telephone interviews. The overall response rate for the survey was 81.1%.

For the survey, the parent or guardian responded on behalf of the child. For the majority of Inuit children (79%), this person was the birth mother or father. Grandparents, foster parents and adoptive parents made up the majority of the remaining parents or guardians who responded to the survey for Inuit children.

In this fact sheet, 'Inuit children' include children whose parents or guardians identified them as Inuit in response to the question: 'Is (child) an Aboriginal person, that is, North American Indian, Métis or Inuk?' Inuit children include those who were identified as Inuit only and those identified as Inuit in combination with another Aboriginal group, either First Nations or Métis.

For more detailed information on the Aboriginal Children's Survey, please consult the *Aboriginal Children's Survey, 2006: Concepts and Methods Guide* (Statistics Canada catalogue number 89-634).

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